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**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD  
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

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Property Address:	<b>819 6<sup>th</sup> Street, NW</b>	<b>X</b>	Agenda
Landmark/District:	<b>Downtown Historic District</b>		Consent Denial
Meeting Date:	<b>September 27, 2012</b>	<b>X</b>	Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	<b>12-492</b>	<b>X</b>	Alteration
Staff Reviewer:	<b>Steve Callcott</b>		New Construction
			Demolition
			Subdivision

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Studio Crowley Hall Architects, representing owner Jung Kong, seeks conceptual design review for alterations and a seven-story addition to the rear of a three-story rowhouse.

**Building History and Description**

819 6<sup>th</sup> Street, NW is a three-story, red brick, bay-fronted rowhouse capped by a slate pyramidal roof. According to the original building permit, the house was constructed in 1896 at a cost of \$5,500 for owner B. Schlosberg. The plans were prepared by A.B. Mullett & Company, the successor firm to the practice founded by Alfred B. Mullett, the former Supervising Architect of the Treasury who was responsible for the design of numerous federal buildings in the 1860s and 1870s and later launched a successful private practice that he ran until his death in 1890.

The property is immediately adjacent to a row of two-story contributing buildings to the south with a seven-story non-contributing apartment building in mid-block. A narrow pedestrian alley immediately to the north of the property separates it from the three- and four-story contributing rowhouses and apartments facing Eye Street.

**Proposal**

The plans call for removing a one-story shed and addition, a two-story rear ell-wing, and the third floor rear wall and rear portion of the roof, and constructing a seven-story addition on the rear and partially on top of the main block of the rowhouse. The addition's footprint would be the width of the property (20'), approximately 61' long, extending to the rear property line, and 80' tall. It would be set back approximately 25' from the building's front façade, extending 9' into and on top of the building's main block; it would rise approximately 42' above the roof of the rowhouse.

The materials of the addition are not specified in the plans – the applicants are primarily interested in obtaining feedback on the overall height and massing of the addition before developing the plans further – but the rendering suggests a contemporary architectural vocabulary with cementitious or metal panels and large banks of glazing.

## Evaluation

When reviewing additions, the Board has most frequently cited the principle that an addition should be subordinate to the historic building to which it is being added in order to allow the historic structure to remain dominant and not overwhelmed by new construction. However, in some limited instances where the context supported it, the Board has approved additions that are distinctly larger than the buildings to which they are attached. These exceptions to the principle of being subordinate have been made if the addition can convincingly appear as a separate building to the rear or side of the historic building. As with the review of new construction, this approach has only been approved when the addition was found to be compatible with its context where buildings of different sizes and types allowed for the compatible insertion of a larger structure.

The proposed addition is clearly not subordinate to the building in size, height or footprint, and while the block does have a tall apartment building several lots on 6<sup>th</sup> Street, the immediate context to the north and south of property is of two-, three-, and four-story historic buildings that does not provide the type of urban backdrop into which the tower could blend in. Rather, the addition would project noticeably taller than the surrounding buildings, potentially looming over the subject building and the other contributing buildings around it.

The proposed 25' setback of the addition also adds to that looming quality and would result in the unnecessary removal of the rear 9' of the main block of the rowhouse. Where the HPRB has approved rear additions that are taller than the historic building it is being attached to, the Board has required that the addition be kept off the main block of the building.<sup>1</sup>

## Recommendation

*The HPO recommends that the Board find the concept incompatible with the character of the historic building and its context within the Downtown Historic District for the following reasons:*

- *The addition would not be subordinate to the building to which it is being attached;*
- *The addition is incompatibly tall for its context of two-, three- and four-story contributing buildings;*
- *The addition would result in demolition of the rear portion of the main three-story block of the building.*

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<sup>1</sup> The Board recently approved four story rear additions on 1220 and 1224 11<sup>th</sup> Street, NW based on the condition that the additions not be visible from the street and that the additions bleed over onto the main blocks of the building. The Board cited concerns about excessive and unnecessary demolition, and the importance of retaining the simple, block-like form of the buildings.